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SUBJECT: ESF FUNDING PROPOSAL FOR MALI

STATE 151653

¶1. In response to reftel, Post proposes to grant 175,000 dollars to NDI to provide support for the municipal elections, planned for March 2009. The April 2007 presidential elections posed many challenges, including the use of the single ballot and voter registration problems. The participation rate was very low, and observers noted many irregularities. Municipal elections are extremely important in a decentralized system, since they determine how local decisions are made and by whom. Radio stations (of which there are now over 230 in Mali) could play an important role in informing voters of the new procedures, and encouraging citizens to vote. We propose that the grant to NDI focus on radio information campaigns to prepare Malians for these elections by encouraging greater participation and helping to avoid the problems witnessed in April. The grant would fund salaries, office space, production of radio messages and air time on local FM stations.

¶2. This project contributes to the Embassy's objective to promote Political Competition and Consensus-Building under the category of Elections and Political Processes. This project advances U.S. Government interests by promoting and reinforcing democracy in a region of historic turbulence and instability.  
McCulley